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New GCE 6GP03 3D – Structure of Global Politics

General comments

Although many candidates had a sound or better understanding of where or how the Topic D specification has been further developed, particularly in terms of the greater emphasis on conceptual and theoretical understanding, others had been less successfully prepared for these matters.

An important discriminator on essay questions was the extent to which responses were able to demonstrate synoptic skills, as these are now defined. Good essay responses often flagged up, usually at the outset, the debate or area of contention that lies at the heart of the question set. In less successful cases, this was then forgotten, leading to a broadly one-sided argument. More successful responses constructed their arguments around rival viewpoints, recognising that there are at least two possible answers to the question while also being able to evaluate these viewpoints sufficiently critically to be able to sustain a chosen conclusion.

The easiest way to ensure that candidates fully respond to synoptic expectations is to train them to identify the debate at the heart of the question in their introduction, identifying what the debate is about and, where relevant, who the debate is between.

Question 1

Many candidates had at least a basic understanding of the key difference between global governance and world government. This was often explained, quite appropriately, in terms of sovereignty, the former allowing states to work together whilst also maintaining their sovereignty, while the latter would mean that state sovereignty is infringed by a single, dominant world power.

In other cases this was explained through the difference between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. Nevertheless, accounts of global governance were often limited to a description of the various international organisations that supposedly make up the modern system of global governance, with the United Nations featuring prominently in most accounts. Strong responses recognised that global governance is a broad, dynamic and complex process of interactive decision-making at the global level that involves formal and informal mechanisms as well as governmental and non-governmental bodies.

By contrast, world government is the idea of all humankind united under one common political authority, a cosmopolis or world state. Weak responses sometimes confused the terms or struggled to find any difference between them. In other cases, candidates moved away from the question itself by spending most of their time discussing the advantages and disadvantages of world government or considering rival realist and liberal views of international organisations.

Consequently, there was an overwhelming need for a definitive opening paragraph for any level 3 answer. The following extract from a script illustrates this.

World Government does not exist. If there were world government it would mean there was a sovereign body at the global level which exercised supreme authority over subordinate bodies at the national level, for example. This is not the case because, since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) sovereignty has been conferred on nation states . . .

This makes the notion of world government impossible as states have exclusive competence over their internal affairs which other states cannot intervene in. This so-called "non-interference principle" is enshrined in article 2 of the UN Charter. . . .

It is through IGOs – Intergovernmental organisations – that the notion of global governance is created. These organisations bind nations together without the loss of their sovereignty (in a unique situation the 27 members of the EU are said to have "pooled sovereignty"). States abide by the rules of these organisations so that there is global governance and order in the world . . .

Question 2

Many responses to this question demonstrated a good or better grasp of realist theory. In the best cases, responses considered both the nature and implications of state egoism, explained in terms of the egoistical tendencies within human nature, as well as the implications of international anarchy. A key discriminator was whether these theories were simply stated or explained. For example, weaker responses often made reference to states pursuing the national interest, often at the expense of other states, but failed to explain why states are so impelled to act.

Similarly, only a minority of candidates were able to discuss the implications of anarchy in terms of forcing states to rely on self-help and to prioritise survival and security.

Nevertheless, there were some insightful discussions of the security dilemma and its implications, and some candidates showed an awareness of the distinction between offensive realism and defensive realism, although there was sometimes confusion about the proper use of these terms (some responses, unhelpfully, referred to

the difference between defensive realist states and offensive realist states). On the other hand, weak responses demonstrated a general lack of knowledge of realism, meaning that candidates tended to discuss conflict generally without linking it to realist views about the causes of conflict.

In such cases, answers suggested that realists believe that global politics is characterised by conflict because world history has seen much conflict, with examples then being provided.

This was the most popular of the short responses and the following example is one of the most succinct introductions.

Realism is a political ideology which places national sovereignty as the most important aspect of international relations. Sovereignty is the idea that states have complete authority to govern within their own border and control their relationships with other states.

Realism also believes that humans are inherently selfish. The balance of power is all that maintains peace, and national security is high on the agenda for all nation states.

Question 3

There were a few good and very good responses to this question. These demonstrated a broad awareness of regional organisations, ranging from the EU to other regional economic blocs as well as to organisations with political, strategic or even cultural orientations, and highlighted a range of factors driving regional integration and co-operation.

Some good responses focused insightfully on the complex relationship between regionalism and globalisation, recognising the extent to which the latter had eroded the capacity of states to operate alone as effective economic actors, increasing the pressure on them to work more closely with other states within their region. The benefits of establishing free trade areas within regional trading blocs was also sometimes well explained, focusing on the wider economic and sometimes political benefits that can flow from free trade.

Similarly, very good responses sometimes explained how and why regional blocs can function as custom unions, protecting themselves from 'unfair' foreign competition. Weaker responses often demonstrated little understanding of wider pressures for regional integration and co-operation, concentrating instead on the process of European integration and the distinctive – and, in some senses, unique – range of factors that have brought this about. Instead of explaining the driving forces behind regional integration and co-operation, a number of responses unhelpfully shifted their discussion to the strengths or weaknesses of regionalism or, sometimes, the advantages and disadvantages of European integration. As ever, if material is not relevant to the specific question set, it cannot be rewarded.

This particular example was economical in its expression yet broad in its perspective. There are blemishes but these are to be expected in examination conditions.

Regional integration is the co-operation, growing inter-connectedness both politically, economically and socially of states in a geo-political region. The EU is the most prominent example. Regional integration has been prompted in various ways. Firstly globalisation has increased the pace of regionalisation.

Hyper-globalists argue that economic globalisation and the growing inter-connectedness of the global economy has lead to regional organisation to emerge. They argue that regional organisations are designed to protect regional interests in a world which is moving ever closer to a global civic state. For example NAFTA imposes tariffs on imported goods to protect their own interests in the North American continent.

Question 4

This was a two part question. The first part focused on the nature of 'soft' power. However, the distinction between soft power and hard power was widely misunderstood, often being equated with the difference between military force and economic pressure. In such cases, the second part of the question, on the reasons why soft power may have become more important in recent years, was poorly addressed, often amounting to a discussion of the growing importance of trade and economic interdependence and the declining importance of war and military power.

Good responses to this question demonstrated a stronger understanding of soft power, seeing it as the ability to influence other actors by persuading them to follow or agree to norms and aspirations that produce desired behaviour. In this sense, soft power refers to the ability to shape the preference of others by attraction rather than coercion. Such responses were therefore able to associate hard power with the use of rewards and punishments, including both military force and economic power.

When candidates showed an awareness that soft power is based on culture, political ideals and moral authority, they were often able to develop impressive responses. However, in some cases associating soft power with culture encouraged candidates to discuss its growing importance in terms of the spread of cultural globalisation. In many cases, these responses became semi-relevant at best. Moreover, the topic of globalisation often encouraged them to write about the trend towards economic interdependence, a development that has more to do with hard power than it has to do with soft power.

Some very good responses recognised that globalisation was clearly relevant to this question, explaining the growing importance of soft power in terms of increased cross-border flows of information and ideas, meaning that global public opinion has become a more important factor in influencing foreign policy, at least in certain parts of the world. Some good responses explained the growing importance of soft power in terms of the failure of George Bush's use of hard power to pursue the 'war on terror', leading to Obama's adoption of a soft power strategy aimed at building understanding and sympathy with the Muslim world.

This response gave a valid definition of soft power and particularly its cultural element without descending into the common Coca Cola view of globalisation/Americanisation.

Soft power is a difficult concept to define. It is the opposite of hard power: getting another actor to perform your wishes by coercion through military incursions or economic sanctions. Soft power is more cultural, it relies on the other actors (be they nations, pressure groups, IGOs) being attracted enough to one's country to want to perform that country's desires, rather than having to be forced to. In the long term this is more efficient. "America's reach is long and powerful, however when its back is turned its power begins to wane. Europe's reach, by contrast, is broad and deep, once sucked in countries never escape the process of reform." (Mark Leonard).

Question 5

This question was successfully answered by a good proportion of candidates who attempted it. A surprising number of candidates started their responses by stating that the World Trade Organisation was formed in 1945, when in fact it was established in 1995 as a replacement for GATT, which had been part of the 1944 Bretton Woods system and had started to function in 1948. Nevertheless, very few responses failed to recognise at least some of the criticisms that had been made of the WTO.

Prominent amongst these were criticisms about structural biases within the WTO that favour developed countries over developing ones, and particularly the USA and the EU. Some very strong responses were able to catalogue a range of trade disputes that had referred to the WTO, demonstrating various biases and

inadequacies on the basis of its response or non-response. Only a small number of candidates, however, fully examined the alleged ideological biases that flow from the WTO's core responsibility of reliberalising international trade.

The ineffectiveness of the WTO in negotiating and formalising trade agreements was also widely commented on, with reference often being made to the slow progress of the Uruguay round and the current status of negotiations in the Doha round. Relatively little was nevertheless made of criticism such as the WTO's general neglect of issues to do with workers' rights and environmental sustainability. In some cases, candidates clearly go confused about the nature and role of the WTO by contrast with other institutions of global economic governance such as the IMF and the World Bank. In these cases, the WTO was sometimes, unhelpfully, accused of imposing Structural Adjustment Programmes on developing states as a condition for providing international aid.

This response was one of the better level 3 introductions. It successfully defined the WTO and, unusually, did so without mentioning GATT.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is an intergovernmental organisation which was formed to provide global economic stability. It has been criticised as it's dominated by Western developed nations.

Much of WTO time is taken up by agricultural disputes between USA, EU and Japan. Foremost amongst these are disputes over Europe's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as nations subsidise their farming industry. Another example which is prominent in the WTO is the Airbus/Boeing rivalry . . .

Question 6

Strong responses to this question recognised that the debate at the heart of this question is between so-called 'hyperglobalisers', who portray globalisation as a revolutionary shift in international politics, and so-called globalisation sceptics, who believe that the impact of globalisation has been greatly exaggerated, the international system functioning very much as it has always done. The key to this was to recognise the nature of the international system, seen as a system in which sovereign states operate within anarchical conditions. Those candidates who did so were therefore able to focus on key debates and arguments, notably those about the extent to which sovereignty has transformed the state, eroded sovereignty or changed the role of the state as the key global actor.

The theme that most candidates focused on was the rise of transnational corporations and their implications for the state. Some, rather crudely, analysed this merely in terms of the relationship between a state's GDP and the value of TNC sales. More sophisticated responses explained how, and discussed the extent to which, the rise of TNCs had made state borders porous or even led to an allegedly 'borderless world'. Only the best candidates were able to discuss issues such as the idea of the post-sovereign state. On the other hand, many candidates demonstrated at least a basic understanding of sceptical arguments, often pointing out that there is nothing new about globalisation, comparing levels of world trade in the late nineteenth century with those in the late twentieth century.

Weaker responses did a variety of things. In the first place, they were one-sided and therefore failed to demonstrate adequate synoptic skills. Second, they focused, often in great depth, on the nature and progress of globalisation, but said relatively little about how, or the extent to which, it had reshaped international politics. Third, they became over-consumed with discussing the wider strengths and weaknesses of globalisation, sometimes turning the question into one about the extent to which globalisation is really a form of 'Americanisation'.

In common with many candidates this response concentrated on globalisation in an American fashion. Rather thoughtlessly, but with many parallels, this candidate assigned most cultural global influence to McDonalds forgetting that they rely upon French fries and Hamburgers. Sadly this misjudgement was predicated in the "good morning" introduction which avoided definitions or statements in favour of politeness.

Globalisation has reshaped international politics in many ways. Globalisation plays a major role internationally, as many nations are involved within it. To some extent globalisation has an effect on international politics, however some might disagree with the statement above.

Question 7

Good responses to this question demonstrated a balanced grasp of the debates about US global power in the post-Cold War era. They therefore, in the best cases, examined the USA's rise to hegemony after WWII, recognising its ascendance within the capitalist world, pointing out also that with the fall of the Soviet Union the USA emerged as the world's sole superpower. Such an analysis was often underpinned by an awareness of the nature and extent of the USA's military dominance and its ability to project power on a truly global basis.

At the same time, strong responses were able to examine developments such as the USA's faltering progress in the 'war on terror', its relative economic decline, and the wider development of multipolarity in place of unipolarity. The strongest responses often demonstrated a reliable grasp of the nature of the 2007-08 global financial crisis and its implications for the standing of the US economy and the shifting power balances within the global economy. However, in too many cases, weaker responses adopted a non-synoptic, one-sided approach to this question, commonly examining only evidence of US decline, while ignoring the significance of developments such as the end of the Cold War, the USA's structural power and its military lead over the rest of the world.

A large number of responses focused, almost exclusively, on the rise of China and whether China is a superpower, perhaps destined to eclipse the USA. These matters, of course, are relevant to the question set, but the way they were sometimes developed orientated them more around the extent of Chinese power rather than the extent of US power. Interestingly, little insight was demonstrated into the nature of power as it affects the power, nor into issues such as the alleged damage that has been done to the USA's soft power and the limited efficacy of its military dominance as demonstrated by its difficulty in winning asymmetrical wars.

This is another example of the "good morning" introduction which avoids any indication of the direction of the argument that followed. Although definitions did follow the time and space devoted to the introduction were completely wasted.

"The USA is a power in decline" this statement can be both true and false depending on one's opinion as there are many ways in which the power of the USA has decreased as the power of other countries has increased.

In this essay I will be outlining ways in which the USA's power is in decline and ways in which it isn't and coming to a conclusion.

Question 8

Virtually all responses to this question recognised the need to say something about the nature of federalism. However, whereas many dealt with this in a fairly perfunctory manner, sometimes, worryingly, linking the idea of a 'federal' Europe to the notion of a European superstate, only a minority of responses demonstrated real insight. Those that did were able to acknowledge the principle of shared sovereignty that underpins any federal system, also, in the case of the best response, recognising that federalism is a contested concept, particularly as it is applied to the EU.

Some responses, nevertheless, were highly impressive, showing deep insight into the nature of European integration and being able to examine the balance between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism in terms of the distribution of power amongst EU institutions and the decision-making processes they adopt. In this respect, considerable attention was sometimes paid to the implications of EU treaties in recent decades, including, in strong responses, a thorough grasp of the implications of the Lisbon Treaty.

Strong responses were genuinely synoptic, recognising that federal or federal-type features could be identified within the EU but that it is difficult to describe the body overall as a federal entity. Most therefore concluded that it was a quasi-federal body or a 'federalising' body. Weaker responses often ignored the issue of extent and therefore demonstrated a very limited range of synoptic skills. Others concentrated solely on the issue of sovereignty, focusing to too great an extent on the UK and on political debates within the UK, often driven by Eurosceptical attacks on EU integration. In some cases, weak responses mustered a great deal of information about various aspects of the EU, its history, powers and institutions, but failed to focus adequately – or sometimes at all – on the issue of Euro-federalism.

These two examples from the same script illustrate the direct approach to introductory paragraphs and analysis in general. A clear thesis is established and then an argument is advanced with supporting detail. Admittedly the CNN stylistic approach may not be to all tastes but it does grab attention.

Rome, 1957. The Treaty of Rome was signed by six countries, France, Germany, Italy and the BENELUX countries. The treaty established the European Economic Community, the first stepping stone on the route to the European Union and, some would argue, eventual federalisation. . . .

Due to the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, two incredibly important posts have been created – that of President and High Representative for foreign affairs. This gives further power to the centralised EU and President van Rompuy and High Representative Baroness Ashton now represent the EU on an international scale – answering Kissinger's question of "Who do I call?"

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Overall subject grade boundaries	54	49	44	39	34
Uniform Mark	80	70	60	50	40

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